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Letter dated 30 July 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to submit herewith a Chair's summary, compiled as a courtesy by the Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations, summarizing the ideas expressed by the participants in the Security Council debate on 11 July 2018 on the subject "Understanding and addressing climate-related security risks" (see annex).

We hope that the summary will serve as an inspiration and support for our collective efforts to tackle climate change and address climate-related security risks.

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex would be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Olof **Skoog**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
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Annex to the letter dated 30 July 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Chair's summary of the debate of the Security Council held on 11 July 2018 on the subject "Understanding and addressing climate-related security risks"

Introduction

The debate of the Security Council on the subject "Understanding and addressing climate-related security risks", which was held on 11 July 2018, was organized by Sweden as President of the Security Council for the month of July. The meeting was chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden and President of the Security Council, Margot Wallström. The Council heard briefings by the Deputy Secretary-General, Amina Mohammed, the Minister of Water Resources of Iraq, Hassan Janabi, and a representative of the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Climate Change, Hindou Ibrahim. In addition to Security Council members, Nauru, Maldives, Trinidad and Tobago and the Sudan spoke under rule 37, representing groups of affected countries.

This was the third time that the Security Council had considered aspects of peace and security related to climate change. An open debate on this theme was organized in 2007 under the presidency of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and another open debate on the impact of climate change was held in 2011, organized under the presidency of Germany. In conjunction with the latter, the Security Council adopted a statement by the President of the Council (S/PRST/2011/15) in which it expressed concern that "possible adverse effects of climate change may, in the long run, aggravate certain existing threats to international peace and security" and noted the importance of including conflict analysis on the possible security implications of climate change in the reporting of the Secretary-General, "when such issues are drivers of conflict, represent a challenge to the implementation of Council mandates or endanger the process of consolidation of peace". During 2017 and 2018, the Council has increasingly recognized the adverse effects of climate change and ecological changes on stability in country-specific and regional contexts, including in the Lake Chad basin region (resolution 2349 (2017)), Somalia (resolution 2408 (2018)), West Africa and the Sahel (S/PRST/2018/3), Mali (resolution 2423 (2018)) and Darfur (resolution 2429 (2018)). In several of those contexts, the Council has emphasized the need for adequate risk assessments and risk management strategies.

The aim of the debate on 11 July was to reflect on how climate-related security risks may affect the stability and security of countries and regions and to develop a shared understanding of the risks at play. The debate also provided an opportunity to reflect and elaborate on what the Council has done to address these issues and what more is needed for the Council to more effectively assess and address climate-related security risks going forward. Recognizing that the primary responsibility for addressing climate change clearly falls within the mandate of other United Nations bodies, the focus of the debate was exclusively on the security implications of climate change.

This non-paper, compiled as a courtesy by the Permanent Mission of Sweden, is a summary of the different ideas expressed by the participants during the open debate. It does not represent an endorsement of the proposals or of their content by any Member State or participant. It will be circulated to all members of the Security Council.

Briefings

In her briefing to the Security Council, the Deputy Secretary-General noted that climate change is a real threat which is proceeding at a relentless pace and that it is inextricably linked to some of the most pressing security challenges of our time. She emphasized that the world's most vulnerable and marginalized people face the greatest risk.

Referring to the multidimensional nature of the crisis in the Lake Chad basin region, the Deputy Secretary-General noted the complex relationship between climate change and conflict. She advised that climate security-risk assessments and reporting from the local, national and regional levels should be considered as an early warning for conflict prevention: "we must understand climate change as one issue in a web of factors that can lead to and exacerbate conflict". She furthermore described the impact of climate change as a threat multiplier that puts additional stress on existing political, social and economic pressures.

The Deputy Secretary-General updated the Security Council on some of the ongoing efforts to tackle climate risks and emphasized that "the United Nations system takes seriously its responsibility to provide integrated analysis to the Security Council as it discusses those issues". She voiced her determination to fully mobilize the United Nations capacity to better understand and respond to climate-related security risks at all levels. To this end, the Secretariat was enhancing climate-related security-risk assessments and management strategies. The Deputy Secretary-General said, "We are strengthening our capacity to understand the impact of climate change on security, to integrate our findings into assessment and planning processes and to better coordinate efforts between system entities." The forthcoming report on the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel was mentioned as an example of reporting on the climate-security nexus. Furthermore, the Deputy Secretary-General pointed out the importance of putting women and youth at the heart of efforts, since the impact of climate change was disproportionally felt by women. At the international level, the United Nations could play a role by facilitating coordination and ensuring that climate-related frameworks are linked. The Deputy Secretary-General said that she counted on the Security Council to do its part.

The Minister of Water Resources of Iraq, Hassan Janabi, described the debate as a step forward with regard to international responses to new and emerging challenges. He described how the combined effect of climate change consequences, including the decline in rainfall and snowfall, had triggered desertification, shrinking green cover and rising temperatures, while reducing land productivity in Iraq. Climate change and water depletion were destroying soil fertility and causing food insecurity across the whole region, causing the displacement of rural populations.

Ms. Ibrahim spoke on behalf of the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Climate Change and urged the Security Council to address climate change as a security risk. She stated that 90 per cent of the economy in the Sahel region relied on agriculture and pastoralism, and described how a heat wave and drought immediately affected people's lives. She further added that terrorist groups took advantage of increasing poverty to recruit young people.

Climate-related threats to peace and security

Several members of the Council spoke of how the effects of climate change and rising temperatures exacerbated other risks and threats and increased their complexity and intensity. Climate change was referred to as a "threat multiplier" and a real factor that already threatens lives and livelihoods around the world.

While noting that the adverse impact of climate change does not automatically result in conflict, a clear majority of Council members pointed out how it brings in its wake a range of direct and indirect consequences that shape security landscapes. It shrinks the availability of resources, which can lead to competition and risk raising tensions, including cross-border conflicts. Instances of drought and water scarcity, it was noted, could compound demographic shifts, displacement and food insecurity. It was said that greater competition over scarce resources would furthermore test the resilience of institutions and governance structures.

Several members of the Council noted that developing countries bore the brunt of the effects of climate change. In some regions, climate change represented an existential threat because of rising sea levels, and in other instances led to the loss of biodiversity and food insecurity, often affecting already vulnerable communities.

Several speakers referred to the situation in the Lake Chad basin region as an example of where the impact of climate change could create fertile ground for the activities of extremist groups, as they took advantage of poverty to recruit the youngest and most fragile. This was especially true where Boko Haram and other criminal networks had taken root.

It was stated in the debate that many people around the world had been forced to migrate, fleeing storms, droughts, floods and desertification, or because their traditional livelihoods, such as fishing and farming, had evaporated. It was also noted that migration could increase the potential for instability, particularly in situations of resource scarcity.

Some Council members pointed out that the Security Council does not have a mandate to address climate change. Several other members stressed that it is within the purview of the Council to consider all risks that have an impact on international peace and security, including climate change.

Policy recommendations

Several speakers noted that it had been seven years since the Council last debated climate and security and that it was high time to step up efforts, beginning with an increased understanding of how climate change interacts with drivers of conflict.

However, as was noted by several Council members, combating climate change required strengthened international cooperation, including enhanced coordination and mobilization of all relevant United Nations organizations. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change provides the primary United Nations platform for responding to the phenomenon of climate change (and each United Nations agency and department must operate within its area of responsibility). It was noted that the Council should strengthen and harmonize its coordination and analysis with those United Nations bodies and agencies charged with addressing the impacts of climate change at large, not least at the country level.

While several recommendations that were put forward during the debate related to efforts to combat climate change, the following section attempts to summarize and synthesize the specific ideas and recommendations that focused specifically on addressing climate-related security risks.

- The Security Council and the United Nations system as a whole need a better understanding of climate-related security risks and the threats that they pose to international peace and security.
- The Council should encourage early and proactive action by the United Nations system through greater analytical capability, improved conflict analysis and

early warning. This would enable better-informed and more timely decision-making in response to warning signs of climate-related security risks.

- In order to fully take into account climate risks in relevant processes, there is a need for improved climate-related security risk assessments and management strategies as requested by the Security Council. Access to reliable data about climate change-related risks is key to avoiding conflicts and sustaining peace.
- The United Nations system must develop improved reporting on the issue. Information on climate-related security risks should be included in the reports of the Secretary-General to the Council, including reports pertaining to situations on the agenda of the Council, in order to provide the Council with the relevant information it needs to fulfil its mandate.
- The Security Council should regularly consider climate-related security risks in its deliberations on relevant country-specific situations.
- There is a need to establish an institutional home for climate and security-related issues within the United Nations system. This would fill a critical gap within the United Nations system and ensure more coordinated action across the Organization. Some speakers called for the appointment of a special representative on climate and security.
- The United Nations should increase the use of diplomatic means to solve resource scarcity issues, including through "climate diplomacy" and similar initiatives intended to create an environment of trust and cooperation.
- Stronger international cooperation is needed to support national capacity to address climate-related security issues. This includes financing, capacity-building and technology transfer, as well as investing in local and rural development to enhance resilience. Such efforts should draw upon experiences and good practices from affected countries.
- There is a need to facilitate increased regional, subregional and cross-border cooperation on climate-related security risks.

Conclusion

Climate change represents one of the gravest current global challenges. The debate in the Security Council on 11 July underlined the need to take the security challenges related to the adverse impacts of climate change seriously and to intensify international cooperation. For the Security Council, with its mandate to maintain international peace and security, it is imperative to fully understand and consider these risks in order to carry out its function.

Sustaining peace and addressing the drivers and root causes of conflict requires an integrated approach that brings together peace and security, sustainable development and human rights. This is in line with ongoing United Nations reforms under the leadership of the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General towards more proactive and integrated ways of working. The Secretary-General's climate summit in 2019 also represents a critical moment for the United Nations system to make progress on those issues. The debate emphasized the need for the international community to step up its overall efforts to tackle climate change and sent a clear message to the Security Council, and the rest of the United Nations system, to intensify efforts to establish the capacities and practices to address climate-related security risks. In order to deliver international peace and security, climate risks cannot be ignored.